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Committee for Programme and Coordination
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Agenda item 8
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-sixth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate

(Item 6)

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 August 2006, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered agenda item 6, entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate".

2. The Committee had before it a compilation of its conclusions and recommendations on the item adopted at its thirty-eighth to forty-fourth sessions, as well as proposals put forward by delegations at its forty-fifth session. The Committee held several rounds of informal consultations and a number of "informal informal" consultations to consider those proposals and others that had been put forward during the current session.

Discussion

3. It was observed that the item on improving the working methods of the Committee was a difficult one. Members had not reached agreement in the past as they had a wide divergence of views on how the work should be improved. The actual problems should first be identified and concrete proposals presented so that the Committee could move forward in an atmosphere of understanding. It was necessary to work on the basis of a frank and open discussion.

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4. It was noted that the Committee had considered several proposals in previous sessions and that they could serve as a basis for discussions on the item in the forty-sixth session. It was stressed that the Committee was working hard on the formulation of recommendations and that progress had been made during the session.

5. The view was expressed that the General Assembly, notably in its resolutions 58/269, 59/275 and 60/257, had repeatedly asked the Committee to improve its working methods and that the previous years' proposals were well known. The Assembly's mandate to strengthen the Committee, while ensuring that there was no negative impact on its consideration of the strategic framework for the period 2008-2009, should therefore be implemented with urgency.

6. The view was also expressed that the utility of the Committee should be measured as to what it achieved. It should provide clear direction to programme managers and stronger focus on coordination and programme aspects. Its report should be short and focused on strategic guidance to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

7. It was suggested that the improvement in the Committee's working methods had to be practical and realistic, taking into account the budget cycle, and that in budget years, emphasis should be placed on the programme aspect and in non-budget years, on evaluation. There was an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the Committee. In that regard, the Committee's role as an important subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council was also noted.

8. The view was expressed that the Committee considered reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services which identified weak areas and proposed measures for improving the Secretariat. Moreover, it considered reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, which also made an important contribution in that regard. In addition, the Committee could play a key role in the review of the inventory of the Organization's mandates to avoid duplication. The suggestion to abolish the Committee should therefore be dismissed and more practical and constructive proposals put forward to make the Committee an effective tool for its members and for the Organization as a whole.

9. Prior to the Committee's consideration of the first agenda item on 21 August, the view was expressed that a respected and long-standing member of the Committee had abruptly withdrawn from the Committee following its forty-fifth session when the Committee had failed in its efforts to improve its effectiveness. It was also noted that two other Committee members had decided to change the nature of their participation in the Committee's forty-sixth session given the Committee's continued inability to reach consensus on recommended improvements to its working methods and procedures which were considered critical for the Committee's future success.

10. Prior to the Committee's consideration of the first agenda item on 29 August, the view was expressed that the fact that the Committee had begun negotiating language for its report without first having reached consensus on improvements to the report's format as well as other measures to make the Committee effective raised doubts about the utility of the Committee.

11. After a full discussion of the agenda item and taking into consideration the various views expressed and proposals put forward by delegations, the Chairperson

presented an informal paper, which enjoyed the broad agreement and support of the Committee. The following is the text of the paper:

"Improving the working methods of the Committee on Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate

"1. The Committee reaffirmed its role as the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination and resolved to undertake, consistent with its mandate,[1] terms of reference,[2] and the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation,[3] improvements in its working methods to enhance the effectiveness of its work.

"2. The Committee re-emphasized the importance of its intergovernmental nature in the discharge of its functions.

"3. The Committee decided to implement the following measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Committee and improving its working methods and procedures.

"4. The Committee called for timely organizational meetings of CPC to be scheduled no later than the beginning of May each year, during which a Bureau for the forthcoming CPC session should be elected. The Committee encouraged member States to provide timely nominations for the Bureau to facilitate the early constitution of a Bureau.

"5. The Committee recommended that the incoming Bureau assume immediate responsibility for the preparation of the forthcoming session it was elected to, which will include the planning of the programme of work for the annual session of CPC and the monitoring of the status of documentation for the session. In the case of the latter, the Secretariat should continuously liaise with the relevant author departments to ensure that documentation is submitted on time.

"6. The Committee re-emphasized the need for the Secretary-General to continue improving the responsibility and accountability systems within the Secretariat and to ensure the timely issuance of documents in accordance with the six-week rule.

"7. The Committee recalled paragraph 9, section III, of resolution 59/265, in which it was decided that the issuance of documents on planning, budgetary and administrative matters requiring urgent consideration by the General Assembly shall be accorded priority status, and urged the Secretariat to ensure that the issuance of the biennial plan and the proposed strategic framework and the proposed programme budget are accorded priority status, in accordance with the aforementioned paragraph of the resolution.

"8. The Committee recalled the relevant resolutions on the official languages of the United Nations, including General Assembly resolution 59/309 of

[1] See Economic and Social Council resolutions 920 (XXXIV), 1171 (XLI) and 2008 (LX), General Assembly resolutions 31/93 and 58/269 and General Assembly decision 42/450.

[2] Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), annex.

[3] ST/SGB/2000/8 of 19 April 2000.

22 June 2005 on multilingualism, and emphasized in that respect the need for the Committee for Programme and Coordination to have in due time all the documents in the six official languages.

"9. The Committee decided henceforth to devote a day during the first week of its session to informal briefings for member and observer delegations on technical issues to be addressed by CPC.

"10. The Committee emphasized the need for the presence of senior programme managers to assist it in the deliberations on agenda items pertaining to the areas of their respective responsibilities.

"11. The Committee emphasized the need for interactive discussion with programme managers to focus on the programmatic aspects of existing mandates, but reiterated the need for brief and concise oral presentations of reports by the Secretariat.

"12. The Committee decided to invite those nominated by the Secretary-General to represent him in formal meetings, to focus their formal statements, inter alia, on any significant developments since the report was issued and explanation of any especially complex issues.

"13. The Committee noted that its August session remains unutilized and recommended that the General Assembly suspend the August session for the duration of the budget reform trial period. The Committee looked forward to a final decision on the review of the planning and budgeting process at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

"14. The Committee agreed to make a recommendation to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly on the duration of its sessions, including the possibility of reducing the length of its sessions, in the context of the review by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session of the experiences of the trial period of the new planning and budgeting process.

"15. The Committee recommended that triennial reviews, in-depth and thematic evaluation reports should include a section on questions in which intergovernmental guidance and follow-up would be useful.

"16. The Committee recommended further that the section on questions concerning triennial reviews, in-depth and thematic evaluation reports should focus on practical and policy issues, which in the view of OIOS cannot be solved by the Secretariat alone and would require the recommendation or decision by intergovernmental bodies.

"17. The Committee recalled its request to OIOS to conduct thematic and in-depth evaluation reports as an important part of the evaluation work of OIOS and agreed to review at its forty-eighth session the scheduling of these evaluation reports to be considered at its sessions.

"18. The Committee recommended that the programme performance report should continue to include in each section a box with a brief description of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals, so as to facilitate the evaluation of the Committee of issues affecting programmatic performance.

"19. The Committee emphasized that the discussion part of its report should be concise and focused in order to further improve its quality.

"20. The Committee decided further that, in producing its report:

"(a) The inputs for the conclusions and recommendations portion should be submitted by a deadline set by the Bureau. The deadline should be reasonable and allow for members to reflect on the responses received from the Secretariat;

"(b) The draft reports should be circulated at least 24 hours before the informal consultations;

"(c) Delegations should, if needed, attempt to obtain instructions and/or inputs from their experts during the 24-hour period.

"21. The Committee stressed the relevance of article 72 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council and reaffirmed that in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Council, observers may participate in its deliberations on any matter of particular concern to them. The Committee also reaffirmed the responsibility and privileges of its members concerning the decision-making process and the recommendations that they adopt and agreed that observers should not contest the decisions of the Committee when members are in agreement on conclusions and recommendations."